

IAAPA PUBLIC AFFAIRS UPDATE

Safer Skies Act Strengthens Drone Protections for Parks

IAAPA's Public Affairs team has long supported federal policies that allow fixed-site amusement parks to work with state and local law enforcement to protect their airspace from unauthorized drone activity. A significant milestone in that effort was reached with the enactment of the Safer Skies Act.

The new law expands counter-drone authority for state and local law enforcement, allowing them to partner with fixed-site amusement parks to detect and mitigate unauthorized drone activity that could threaten guest safety or disrupt operations. It also establishes training requirements, oversight, and clear guardrails for the use of mitigation tools.

This law represents the first of two key steps toward strengthening airspace protections. The second will come through the FAA's upcoming rulemaking under Section 2209, which will determine how fixed-site amusement parks can petition the FAA to restrict unauthorized drone operations in their airspace.

As the FAA develops this rule, IAAPA's Public Affairs team has encouraged the agency to adopt objective, risk-based criteria when evaluating petitions, rather than relying solely on attendance thresholds. Factors such as the permanence of operations, public access, outdoor crowd density, operational hazards, and clearly defined property boundaries should all be considered.

Additional recommendations include allowing permanent airspace designations for qualified attractions, establishing reasonable safety buffers around protected areas, and including adjacent parcels—such as resort properties. The framework should also clearly confirm that attractions may continue operating their own authorized drones, which many facilities rely on for legitimate purposes, including drone shows and entertainment, pyrotechnic coordination, media and promotional activities, and safety and security operations.

Engagement with the FAA will continue as the rulemaking process moves forward. The Public Affairs team is awaiting the release of the agency's proposed rule and will submit formal comments once it is published.

Sincerely,



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